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# TETCOTT HUNT WEEK

ILLUSTRATED.

BY

JOHN B. WOLLOCOMBE.

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**COLLECTION**

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My dear Gilbert

I am much obliged to you for taking a copy of my book & hope you will mention it to your friend. It is to be printed in pica type on cream laid paper wide margin & bound in red & silver cloth board. It gives the adventures of a young bachelor during the Tetcott Hunt week & brings in many queer but true stories & a description of a days shooting in the olden time. I have made 15 page size drawings illustrating the story & make the

publishing costly. Price 3/.
With regard to yr. question about
my father's grandfather you are
right or nearly so with regard to his birth
I send you a copy of Wollocombe pedigree
wt. Col Vivian sent me not long since
He only goes by registers & documents
& does not go back as far as Prince & Risdon
Our old residence was at Wollocombe
but on marrying a cohuriff of Barry
whom he calls Henry Alcombe instead of
of Henry (Barry) at Coombe: Coombe
in Roborough became his residence
I have drawn the cross wt. I designed for
Frank's grave & have sent ~~of~~ the sketch to Emily
at her request.
It must have been a sad shock & also
disappointment at Dering being taken away

just as he had obtained command of his regiment. She seemed so proud of him when she was here & naturally to

Give my love to Frances

& believe me

Yrs very sincerely

John B Wollocombe

3-C10

# *THE TETCOTT HUNT WEEK.*

# The Tetcott Hunt Week.

## ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES.

*WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS.*

BY

JOHN B. WOLLOCOMBE.

London:

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1895.

something within me foretells failure. I have not as yet been successful in my attempts to lead the "field." When a small boy I went well; why cannot I do so now? I sit down and recall to mind my early, boyish experiences of hunting before the first real sorrow of my life came upon me.

When about seven years old, I was committed to the charge of a trusty old servant, who took me to "see the meet" at a neighbouring squire's place. But I made up my mind that I would see a little more of the fun than the mere "meet." I would follow on with the rest of the field. How well I remember this my first day with hounds! It comes back to my mind as if it were yesterday. I see before me now the important huntsman with his loving and highly-prized pack of "beauties," and the distinguished members of the hunt on their noble horses. To be one of such a brilliant "field" was indeed an honour! But then came the doubt, could I be accounted "one of them," so long as I remained attached by a leading rein to a fat coachman on a carriage horse? No. I was merely an appendage. That my father's son, a man of my age, should be thus led about like an organ grinder's monkey, was not to be endured. So when old coachee was having a tell with a friend, and his head turned away from me, I reached forward, unbuckled the rein from my pony's bit, and went off

after some riders who were carefully picking their way across a soft, miry bit of ground, which my pony got over cleverly. When my old proprietor and leader turned round to propose our moving on, great was his astonishment and dismay on finding nothing at the end of his line. I was near enough to see the expression of his countenance. No salmon fisher, when a thirty pounder has broken away, could look more disconcerted than he did, as he gathered in and pocketed the rein. He soon caught sight of me, however, and followed in pursuit; but was immediately stabled in the bog, which I had just crossed, and did not come up with me until I and my pony were on such good terms, and getting on so well, that he was content to follow in my wake: and hard work he found it to do so.

Man and horse were done to a turn when "we killed our fox."

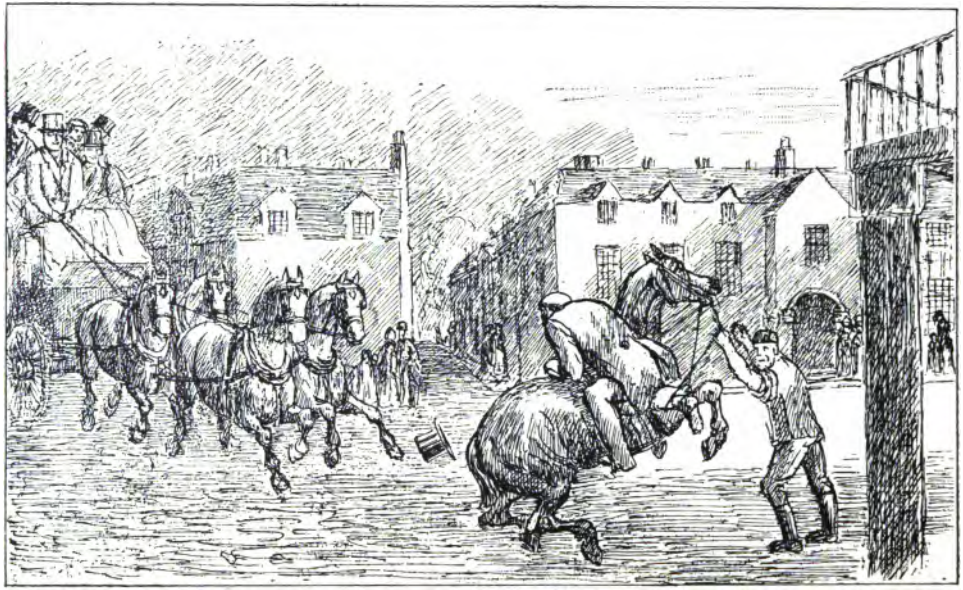
Soon after this my entry, there came into our neighbourhood one of England's naval heroes, who had determined to refresh his war-worn spirit with the grand sport of fox-hunting.

The first thing towards the accomplishment of his purpose was to find a horse strong enough to carry his bulky person, and at the same time fast enough to live with hounds. He himself, though well up in nautical matters, was quite ignorant as regards the different parts and members that go to

the making up of a horse. But fortunately a friend, who lived near him, discovered the requisite animal, which henceforth became the hunt's ship. A camel is called the ship of the desert, and this horse was yclept the ship of our happy hunting grounds. He was eighteen stone burden, built on good lines, of moderate breadth of beam, neat figure-head—displacement not as yet ascertained—and bearing the name of " Neptune."

But the gallant captain had to learn how to manage this conveyance—the use of the yoke lines, etc.—before venturing to make a voyage. The attaining a perfect balance when on board was as difficult to him as the acquiring sea legs is to a landsman. And he had to learn on which side to board, and which foot to commence with in climbing on deck.

But every difficulty is at last overcome by the painstaking and persevering, and after a time our friend thought himself capable of making sail for the nearest town. He had a successful voyage, and landed at the inn from the left side of his conveyance, and alighted on the curb of pavement in front of the inn door. And as he had to mount from the left side, there, on the same spot, would he station himself when the homeward voyage had to be made. The help of the curbstone in climbing up would be great.



"AT THIS CRITICAL MOMENT UP COMES MR. A.'s FOUR-IN-HAND."

But things sometimes occur which alter the whole tenor of our plans. "Neptune" was brought up to the inn door with his head pointing in the direction opposite to that it had been on his arrival. This upset and deranged all the captain's calculations. He approached what he supposed to be the left side, and put his left foot into the stirrup. But the right foot, which had so cleverly made its way over the saddle on leaving home, now struck against "Neptune's" neck, entangled itself in the tiller ropes, and could not be got over. How was this? He had been so full of theory and rules for regulating his movements, that he had not taken a *general* observation of his position and bearings; but now that he does so, he perceives that his face is towards the tail of his horse, and not towards the head, as he had been accustomed to find it in his daily practice at home.

"But this," said he, when speaking of the adventure, "would not have much mattered, for I could have slewed round and headed the other way, but, as ill-luck would have it, up came Mr. A.'s four-in-hand drag at that critical moment. 'Neptune' became unsteady, and in his pitching and tossing off went my hat in front of the leaders' feet, whilst I was left grimly clinging to the saddle, and unable to clear my foot from the stirrup so as to profit by the ostler's suggestion that it would be better to 'unlight,'

as I could not possibly gain my seat on the saddle, except by some feat of agility unknown to him, simple landsman that he was."

But in course of time our gallant friend was able to follow hounds, though he sometimes came a header over the port or starboard bows.

Two years after the coming of this ocean swell upon us, when I was the proud and happy owner of a clever cob, and beginning to feel myself really a member of the hunt, joy and gladness fled from our hitherto happy home. My mother died. And my father, who was old and infirm—he had married very late in life—was ordered by his doctors to the South of France. I accompanied him thither, and, after ten years' sojourn in a foreign land, returned *alone* to my once bright and joyous home. How changed it seemed without those kind and loving ones who had made it such a happy home to me. But it is in itself the same beautiful old place, and I must try to make it the same happy one to myself and all about me that it was of yore. Farming will add to its interest: a dairy and poultry yard to its comfort.

I have the home farm on hand, and am about to stock it. An agent is to buy some cows for me on Wednesday. I am not knowing enough to do so myself. Mistakes are sometimes made by the inexperienced. I remember my father's story of a

music master in the north of Devon who was, on a certain occasion, sadly disappointed in a purchase.

Whilst passing through the butter market of his town one day, the thought occurred to him that a cow would be more useful and profitable than the pony on which he was accustomed to ride when he visited his pupils in the country. He could easily walk to any of their residences. So at the next fair he looked out what he considered a *very* fine cow, and asked its price, and also the amount of butter it produced. The owner told him the price, and putting his finger to the side of his nose, screwed up his right eye, which manœuvre our friend supposed to be a signal that the price was a secret between them, and revealed in confidence.

The animal seemed cheap. But how about the milking qualities? "You have not told me how much butter it will give," he said. "Come now, my good man, will you warrant it to give a pound a day?" The farmer, thinking our friend facetious, replied in what he supposed to be the same chaffing vein—"A pound of butter a day! O yes, I'll warrant it will give two pounds, if it will give an ounce." This was satisfactory indeed. And the owner of this heavy milker, consenting to take the pony with saddle and bridle in part payment, the new purchase was driven to the Professor's stable, and his servant maid sent out to milk it. But she

returned in a state of great consternation, and cried out, "Why, measter, tes a steer!"

So it is well to be cautious in buying animals of which you know little or nothing. But, I flatter myself, I *do* know something about a horse. And I have picked up four short-legged, well-bred hunters that are said to be well up to their business, which, I must confess, is more than I am. I can ride a bit, and have had plenty of practice, as my father always had some good horses, up to the time of his death. I have a fair hand and seat, and am not like our French Count who "when his horse did not shomp sthraight did not remain." But I know nothing of hunting, or of the way to negotiate the enormous banks and fences of my native county.

In consequence of my long residence abroad I am almost a foreigner, and "a fox-hunt to a foreigner seems strange."

I would give anything to distinguish myself in this noblest of all sports; but, after three months' experience, I am not very skilful in crossing a country. The bogs seem to beckon me into them, and the banks make me giddy when I look down from their top. The height of man and horse, added to that of an eight-foot bank, gives a perpendicular drop of sixteen feet, and allowing for deviation, say twenty feet of space through which—should the order of landing be head first, heels second—the head has to

traverse before it reaches the ground. There are also many streams and rivers intersecting this county, and these have to be crossed occasionally when there is not much time to select a place. The banks are often steep and slippery, and sometimes give way beneath one—there is an awkward movement of horse, a splash, a plunge, a flounder in the rocky bed of the stream, and a risky jump and scramble up the opposite bank.

Then, again, there are endless woods and coppices through which one has to crash and struggle, at the risk of a blow on the knee or a flick in the eye. But I am told that all these difficulties and dangers by flood and field increase the excitement and *pleasure* of hunting, and that I shall soon get used to them. It may be so, for I have heard that eels get used to being skinned alive. Who knows but that I shall some day smile at my present estimation of obstacles which now appear to me serious ones.

But what has hitherto brought me to grief is a nervous, restless anxiety to distinguish myself and to lead, instead of being content to be piloted by others more experienced than myself. Ah, well! h'm! Surely my chair must have some magic power to make life change its sombre hue to brighter colours. As I give myself up to its influence, my troubles and anxieties gradually grow less and less, and at last fade away, as phantoms,

into thin air. They disappear as does a scene in a dissolving view. And lo! there stands before me a graceful form, with face radiant with beauty and goodness—such a face as England alone produces, and yet her sunny, nut-brown hair is encircled with gardenia, and flowers of the Riviera festoon her robe. In her hand is a cluster of oleander blossoms, the scent of which I am so fond. This she holds out to me, but I cannot reach it. She pauses for a moment, and then, with a look of surprise and disappointment, vanishes from my sight. She is gone: perhaps for ever.

A chilly feeling creeps into my heart, and I shudder at the thought that some more favoured suitor may gain the prize that I have been unable to grasp. I gaze on the spot where she just now stood, but see nothing but the ashes of a fire that has burnt itself out, and a clock on the chimney-piece which points to the hour of midnight.

Must to bed, for I intend to be stirring early to-morrow. I wish to have plenty of time to get myself up correctly for the grand meet at "Halwell Station." Hundreds will be there.

At all times I dislike to be hurried of a hunting morning—obliged to bolt my breakfast and to rush off in ill-temper and in a slovenly state of attire.

To-morrow I must be very particular as to my appearance, and have decided not to take sandwiches

and flask with me, as they spoil the sit of one's coat. I have no horn case and leather pocket contrivance attached to my saddle.

If I make a hearty breakfast I ought to be able to hold out till dinner-time for once in a way.

Must not overdo the provisioning though, for a friend of mine, about to start on a week's visit to a delightful country house, took in a double cargo to save lunching on the road, and after riding a mile or two on his journey, became so faint and ill that he was obliged to return home and give up all his anticipated pleasure.

## Tuesday, February 13th, 1894.

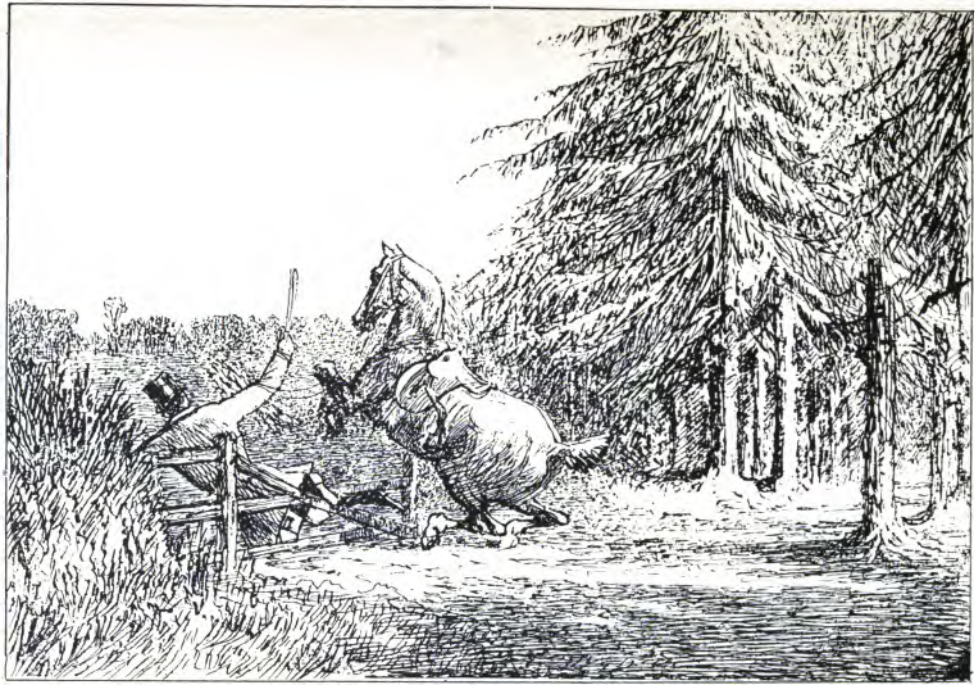
A KNOCK at bedroom door. Man enters to say that breakfast is ready. Seems surprised to find me in bed. He brought me my hot water half-an-hour ago. I was then awake, he says, and asked him the hour. I jump out of bed. Make hasty toilet. Pity! Sure to be a lot of ladies at the "meet." No time for breakfast. Cram some food into my pocket. Will eat it on the way to covert. Can't. Horse too fresh. Try to think a ride before breakfast very enjoyable.

On the road nothing worthy of note occurs, except that I have to dismount to take a stone out of horse's foot, and in regaining his back, my breeches give way at the hinder part of the thigh. Rent, however, scarcely visible when I am in the saddle. Meant to have sported leathers to-day, but in my hurry caught up the cords, laid out in readiness for wet weather. Marvelling much at such an oversight, I put my hand to my chin. I have not shaved. And from the glimpse which I get of a broken and wavy brim, I am convinced that it cannot belong to the bran new hat, bought for this especial occasion. Cannot venture to take hat off to determine the

point as two lively gloves are in it. I feel them dancing on the top of my head and beating time to horse's trot. My necktie too bothers me. It has been creeping up the back of my head higher and higher till stopped by brim of hat. And my breast-pin is so near my nose that it makes me squint. I must be more like a Guy Fawkes than a gay fox-hunter. This is not what I had intended. My usual hunting get-up is perfect; and my arrival at the covert side creates quite a flutter in the dovecot. I arrive at the "meet," but there is no one to welcome me. All for the best, perhaps, under my present dilapidated circumstances. Hounds have moved off. I follow on to the covert, which is close by. Presently a lady trots down a cross-ride and approaches me. I salute her in my usual courtly style. When hat is removed, out flutter the gloves like a conjuror's pair of pigeons. Effect startling; but not good. In fact my bow is spoilt by those ungrateful elves, who are amusing themselves at my expense, as they have been doing the whole way to covert. And are, perhaps, looking forward to the fun of making me reveal to the lady the ragged state of my nether garments. If so, this part of their joke is spoilt, for a young lad chances to be near, and restores these wicked gloves to me. Lucky! as the lady is on my near side. She passes on down a ride crossed by deep, boggy ditches and blind drains. I decide not

to follow, but to retire to that part of the plantation which the hounds have drawn, and there to breakfast. The parcel of food is not easily extracted from my pocket—I had seized on an old newspaper in my hurry, and had wrapped it loosely round a junk of meat and bread. Get it out at last, and place it with my clasp knife in front of me on the saddle, and then proceed to arrange my tie, which is sadly aggravating me. At this moment the hounds find, horse plunges, hat, having no string, comes off, and together with breakfast and knife rolls into the gutter. I jump off to recover these things, when, lo! the whole "field" come sweeping by me. Whilst bareheaded, with waistcoat unbuttoned, ends of necktie hanging loose, I am, at one and the same time, struggling with my horse and endeavouring to collect the scattered fragments of my breakfast. Fox takes another turn in covert, and back come the equestrians, whilst I am now endeavouring to press out and restore to some shape my unfortunate hat, which has been trampled on by my horse. I clap on hat, roll up a portion of the bread and meat, button up waistcoat, mount, and make for the top of covert, where I arrive just as the hounds are getting away with their fox at this very point. The exit from the plantation has bars across it. I get off to take down the top one, and am about to lead over, when horse takes the initiative, jumps before I am

"WHEN LO! THE WHOLE 'FIELD' COME SWEEPING BY ME."



"HORSE TAKES THE INITIATIVE."

ready, and knocks me over the bars. Reins are on my arm, and as I fall the horse is checked in his jump and nearly brought a-top of me. Mount, and away across the first field to gateway fenced with pole and faggots. A stiff jump. But not wishing to get another thump on the back from horse, I harden my heart, and go at it. Over! All right! Splendid! Wonder if any of them saw that? I am leading, and in style, too. Next we come to a bank, through which cattle have made a narrow gap. Looks easy enough; but my toes strike against the sides. Fortunately the hedge is a loose one, large portion comes away on each foot. Might have been worse.

Now hounds cross a river easy of entry, but bank on further side looks rotten. Lay hold of a young alder and swing myself from the saddle to top of bank. Alder gives with my weight, and inclines towards the river. Horse jumps bank all right, but I am left dangling over a deep hole. Manage to drop on a rock, and then, with a hop, skip, and a jump, I reach the tail end of the pool, just as hat, whip, and gloves—both right-hand ones, the impostors—are on the point of entering the stickle to take a merry dance down stream. As I secure these I look up, and, to my dismay, there are the first flight—young ladies amongst them—making merry at my expense. They have seen the whole move, which did not take many seconds. They cross, and

take the bank with perfect ease. It is not rotten, after all. My horse's bridle, fortunately for me, has got entangled in a thorn bush. But just as I have cleared the reins, and am about to mount, up come the rest of the "field." And this so excites my horse, that whilst I am making vain efforts to mount him, he is continually dragging me further and further up the wood that ascends from the river. Again and again I endeavour to get up on his back, but am unable to do so. He will not stand still a moment. At the top of the wood there is a gate; against this I press him so close that he cannot rise at it. Then I mount by aid of the bars of gate, thus favouring the weak part of my armour, which has been sorely tried by my late struggles in the wood and up the hill. When mounted, I open the gate, and find myself on an extensive moor, where I might have seen the whole chase spread out before me had I been a minute sooner. However, I have a glorious spin over this open ground. Wonder how many men, in the grand runs that we read of, see much more of the hounds than I am doing now. Some men imagine themselves in the run when they are following, at a respectful distance, the last bit of pink visible. Why should I not call upon imagination to do without that bit of pink. I am with hounds, if not in the same field, I am in the same county with them, and going well—and safely, as I

"I LOSE MY FOOTHOLD."

suppose—when, suddenly, my horse's forehand disappears, and I am shot off into a spongy bog. Ugh! My horse flounders out of the mire, and I am just about to lay hold of his reins, which are trailing, when, with a toss of his head, he turns from me, and goes off tail on end, and blowing like a grampus. He turns his head from side to side to catch a peep at my amiable countenance and mud-laden boots, and to see how *I* go through dirt. He is poking fun at me. Sometimes he stops to let me come up with him; and when I try to put the crook of my whip on his reins, lo! with a wheel, he places his tail where his head was the moment before, gallops off a few strides, and then settles down into a grand high-stepping showyard trot, pulling up every now and then with a loud snort. The hounds and horses are too far ahead to attract him, so I absorb his whole attention. After a time we get into a corner near a gate. Here I make another attempt to capture him, but he evades me, and makes for the gate, beyond which is an extensive moor, where he will have plenty of room for the carrying on of his Tom Tiddler's Land game. Luckily for me, on each side of the gate—a low, rotten thing—there is a pool of water. At this he stops, sniffs, and snorts, to find out what sort of bottom it has. This is my opportunity, my last chance. I rush in, and stop him just as he is rising for the jump. I turn him round,

head from the gate, mount, face round again, and put him at the rotten timber. But our previous struggle in the water has broken into some drain or soft place. His hind legs sink as he is taking off in his jump. He is unable to clear the gate, and an ash stick, laid across as a support, prevents his going through. We come a cropper into the pool of black water on the other side. My hat is compressed like a gibus, and my garments are made still more black and unsavoury. But such adventures, I am told, add to the excitement and pleasure of the chase. Certainly, a gallop over a mile of springy turf and heath, *added* to my late accidents, produces the promised effect. My blood is up, I fancy myself leading in the shires. Feel as if nothing could stop me. Ride for a gate in the distance. But the nearer I approach it, the stiffer it looks. And as I am not really leading in the shires—indeed, a forward place would hardly suit the tattered state of my garments—it will be better to open the gate. Ha! it is padlocked, and the upper hinge reversed. The little bay horse's rider has had enough of pleasure and excitement for one day. And see! There is wheat on the further side. It is unsportsmanlike to ride over wheat. I will not do mischief to either gate or field.

I turn from the wheat field gate and see that others have done the same. I follow their tracks as long as I can, but miss them when I come to

"I COME A CROPPER."

"WHILST I AM THUS PLACED HE TAKES A FLYER INTO THE NEXT FIELD."

some heath and short furze. After that I follow my nose, and come to a boundary fence, high and newly made up. I select a place free from layers and binders. Horse refuses, but after some persuasion jumps to the top; but then instead of executing a forward movement, slips back suddenly from between my legs, to clear his feet from a pole and hurdle or iron harrow guarding the unfinished outer side of hedge. I find myself on his neck. His ears only are visible to me. Whilst I am thus placed, he takes a flyer into the next field. I have his neck between my knees as he lands, but the concussion shakes me off, and I fall heavily. Up all right, but collar bone painful. On again, more cautiously now, over ditches, gaps, and low fences, to a lane full of yellow stews, that send jets of liquid ochre into face and eyes. It is rather fortunate that I have no one *immediately* in front of me now. I would not object to having the whole field in my rear. What a splendid run they must be having over this fine wild country! If I could but see a tail hound, or even a tail coat, I might more easily fancy myself in the run. That ill-judged getting off at the river has cut me out of the fun, and from all hope of distinguishing myself. Lost my chance. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to——" But what do I see? Surely if the mud of this lane has not confused my eyesight, there are

men and horses in that wood yonder. Hounds have earthed their fox there. I am in time, after all, for the finish. I shall be mentioned in the report of the run as one of the few up. I hurry on, tie up my horse to a bush, and steal in amongst the group of first flight men. They are watching and listening, with their faces turned from me. I am unnoticed. I pull out a cigar and strike a light with as loud a crack as I can. This has the desired effect of calling attention to my presence. But, alas! only to blast my hopes. For one of the party turns towards me and sings out, "What! *you* here! Where the dickens did you drop from? You have not been heard of since we left you collecting curiosities in the river." "Pity you did not come on with us," says another, "for we have had rather a good hunting run, though scent was indifferent and it died away at last. Lost our fox about a mile from here; came back to this covert and found a fresh one, which has gone to earth. The farmer, who lives 'handy by,' says, ''e's a proper old chap, that's what 'e is. My volks have seed un in our yard in broad day. I wish 'e was dead.' So, as most of the field are gone, and he will not draw any more to-day, Mr. Coryton has consented to wait five minutes or so, whilst the terrier is in. We may have a scurry to finish the day, and then it will be home, sweet home."

"GONE TO EARTH."

I am too wet to remain for the end of this. Crestfallen and disappointed I mount and depart. There will be no mention of me in the report of this day's proceedings. These men, and probably all that were out—since the run was a slow one, and allowed them time to remark who was there—know that I am a defaulter.

I turn and go home very worn and hungry. Put my hand into pocket for my food. What can this be so soft and pulpy? Draw out a giant horseball, or something very black and nasty. It is my breakfast, saturated with filthy bog water. Try to eat it, and to imagine that the black liquid is walnut pickle. Imagination objects to the smell of the thing. My *effort*, however, is not to go unrecorded, for just as I am about to try once more, there issues from the yard of a roadside inn a bevy of young ladies with their attendant esquires. They had turned homeward at the end of the first run, and had put in here to give their horses gruel. They appear to be in high spirits. "What *have* you got there?" says one. "It looks very *nice!*" says another. "Won't you give *me* a bit?" pleads a third. Whilst a satirical male of the party tells them not to touch it, as it is a black pudding and made of pig's blood, a thing unlawful to eat. "He does not care for fox's blood, or he would have come on with us on the spec," is the taunt of a mere schoolboy, and capped by a heavy

dragoon's "Haw, haw! pwefers tickling twout!"

And these are the people whose admiration I was to have gained. Here are some of those fair creatures in whose eyes I hoped to shine as a hero. And these fiends, rather than men, are they with whom I was ready to contend in manly rivalry and to admit to my heart as brother sportsmen.

Fortunately—"for it is ill jesting with a hungry man"—our roads branch off at once. Then it is that I recognize among the party my lovely Riviera acquaintance, who had long reigned supreme in my heart. Little did I dream of seeing her here. On the three occasions of my confronting the "field" to-day, I was too abashed to distinguish anyone. Not for worlds would I have appeared before my love in the ridiculous positions in which I was then placed. *And*, that she should have seen me regaling myself with such food as this! Begone, thou worse than Dead Sea fruit! But my misfortunes do not appear to have altered her kind feeling towards me, for she pulls up to greet me, and as she departs, casts back a look of love and sympathy, which is as balm to my troubled spirit, reconciles me to all mankind, and blots out the remembrance of the disappointments and vexations of the day. Foolish anger vanishes at that glance. My fast, too, has humbled me, and as I pursue my way I begin to see things in a new light. May it not be that I myself

am the cause of all my worries and mortification? Why should I, an ordinary mortal, aspire to outshine all my compeers in the hunting field, and to gain undivided dominion over Eve's fair daughters? They have ever given me more consideration than I deserve. Even those from whom I lately parted were not really unkind and inconsiderate. They knew not of my disappointments, or of the gnawing hunger that is consuming me. Their high spirits and cheerful voices offended me, because I myself was so morose and ill-tempered. Shall I deny the sweetness of the flowers because I am incapable of sipping their honey?

Dear creatures! your rippling laughter and happy voices *now* come back to me as sweet music. Your merry glances and bright bewitching smiles are as gleams of sunshine across my path. And from behind each bush your fair faces seem to peep forth at me as I pass along. And thine that saddened at my distress and at thy fair sisters' jesting, now shines on me radiant and bright as the evening star. Love and sympathy, kindness and truth, illumine that countenance. And when I think of my own mean, paltry ambition, that aims only at self-glory, I despise the man that rode forth from my home this morning. I will try to be more worthy of her, and to take pleasure in the achievements of my comrades, as well as in my own, that when old age withdraws me from the fore, I may be able to live

again in my children—joy in their happiness, glory in their success.

Home. Dinner: very acceptable. When I have appeased my hunger, I call my man to me, and say, "William, to-morrow is to be a new departure day. Get me out of bed in good time. I shall not be offended—when up—at any necessary force used for that purpose. Get me out of bed by some means or other, even if you are obliged to have recourse to dynamite."

William replies, "Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. But you said, sir, just now, that to-morrow is 'New Departure.' I thought it was 'Moorcombe Corner' in the fixtures for the week. If Jim has to go on with your horse I must make enquires about the road, as he is a stranger to the country, and depends on me for instructions."

"No, William, I shall not send on. Certainly not to 'New Departure.' Jim would hardly find it, even with your assistance. A new departure is not the name of a place, but is a term which means a new manner of life—a new order in the conduct of affairs. For instance, I shall breakfast before leaving home. Allow time for my ride to covert. Commence my ride in good leathers, not in unreliable cords, which, after serving me well for a year or more, and having gained my perfect confidence, fail one in the hour of the utmost importance. I shall

take a *pair* of gloves with me. See to this, William, and that I have my new hat. And tell the cook to cut some very thin sandwiches, and to put them up in two sealed packets. I may have to offer one to a—a friend. And, William, put some port wine into my small silver flask. I believe port is the correct wine for la—— a new departure, I mean. Good night.

"But stop, William. Let me caution you to approach me warily in the morning twilight. I have been known to slip my foot suddenly from beneath the bedclothes, and to thrust it violently against the lower buttons of a waistcoat, reducing the wearer of said waistcoat to collapse. Remember also to remove all missiles from my reach. Then approach, and insist on being master for the nonce. Be bold, but be cautious. I should not like to hurt you. Nor do I wish that I myself should appear in a disfigured state at the meet. So if you can get me up without the use of dynamite, do so."

William retires. I wonder what he will do to rouse me.

I get me early to bed, and am soon in the arms of Morpheus. Fairy forms with smiling faces hover around me. They take to playing bo-peep from behind armchairs, wardrobes, and other hiding-places. Then they dance; and placing the most lovely of the group in their centre, crown her queen of the revels, and circle round her in graceful move-

ments. On a table in window recess they place a chair, as throne, the curtain hangings form a canopy to it. On this they place my love, and lowly bow to her, and kiss her hand. Then they take up to her all my treasures, one by one, as tribute offerings. Pins, rings, watch, toilet ornaments, and nicknacks, all are presented to be examined, admired, and laid at her feet. Next they proceed with my clothes, and carry up each of the garments placed out for the morrow's hunting. The buttons of waistcoat seem to be much admired. All is going well; when, lo! horror of horrors! One of the fairies advances with those very garments which had played me so shabby a trick on the road to covert. Where she could have found them I cannot conceive. They were not in my room when I came to bed. In another instant she will shake out the wretched, ragged, and bespattered things for the inspection of my Queen of Beauty. Not a moment is to be lost. I spring out of bed. And wake to the consciousness that it is all a dream. William enters with hot water. He has a candle in his hand, and I am able to see his look, first of astonishment, then of relief, which again changes to one of indifference and usual calmness as he feigns to account my early rising as quite an everyday occurrence, and all the overnight arrangements as mere moonshine. It is the dawn of St. Valentine's day.

## Wednesday, February 14th, 1894.

I GET into my tub at once. And because I am not late and in too great a hurry, complete my toilet in less time than it took yesterday, yet I am, if my glass deceive me not, sufficiently well got up.

I sit down to a comfortable breakfast table, which is covered with something better than junks of meat and bread or black puddings. Then, in good time, I mount my horse, in no fear of anything giving way. And no longer impelled by "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself and falls on the other side." For I am resolved to be content to see and enjoy the run without my old craving to eclipse all my companions. Few are able to lead, and I am not one of the few—as yet. My frequent failures prove that something still remains to be learnt before I shall be accounted the Jack Mytton or Osbaldeston of my generation.

I arrive at the meet in time to see Back jog up with the hounds, all looking bright and businesslike. Soon after comes the genial Master, whose hearty greeting does one good, and is a pleasant commencement to the day's sport. With the Master comes Mr. Coryton and others, who are guests at Tetcott

during the week. Here I have before me the carefully-bred pack, with its very neat huntsman and whip. Here I have before me the Master and his guest, two of Devon's worthies, and who may rank among her best sportsmen. Here also is Mr. Sperling, another popular M.F.H., and the Messrs. Lobb—"*par Lobbile fratrum*"—good men and true, his predecessors, and who, succeeding Mr. Henry and James Deacon and "the Leamons," made the third pair of brothers that have of late years hunted the country now called Mr. Sperling's, Mr. Kelly, of Kelly, a most popular and successful Master, having resigned it to them. Here, too, is Lord Ebrington and Sir William Williams, the past and present Master of the Devon and Somerset staghounds, also many other distinguished lovers of the chase.

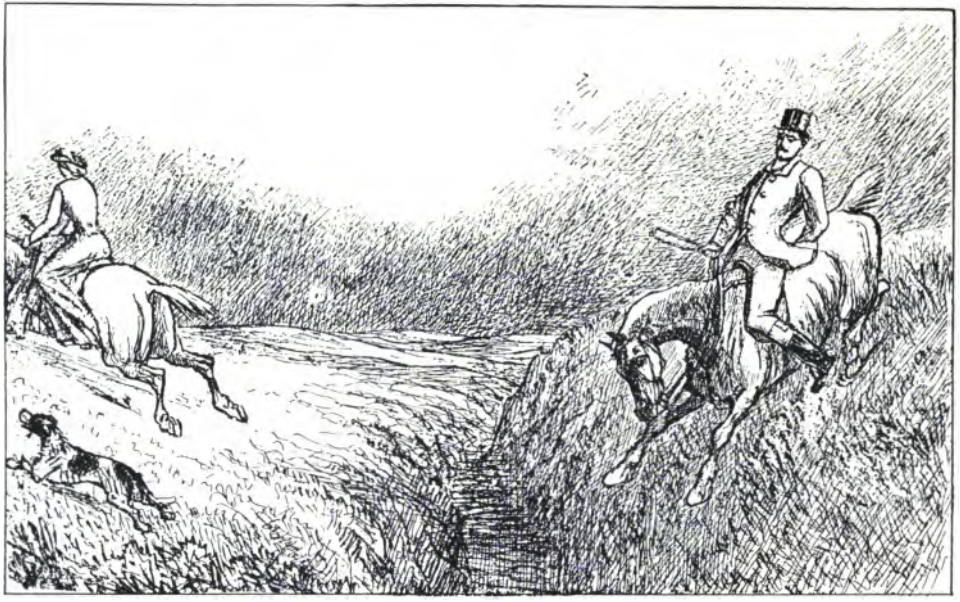
But my attention is drawn away from this galaxy of hunting men to some young ladies, who are now advancing along the road. It is the same party—accompanied by the same esquires—that assailed me yestere'en with their lively jests. They come up to me at once, as if wishing to make amends for any offence they may have given me. The men whom I called fiends are pleasant and friendly now. And the ladies! How could I have been so lost to myself as to feel angry with such charming creatures! Now doubly charming, as they bring with them one dearer and more welcome than the flowers in May,

and whose sweet voice now greets me in the soft music that has lingered in my ears ever since we parted in the South of France. She tells me that she is staying with a friend who resides in the neighbourhood, is so glad to meet someone that she knows, and will enjoy to talk over old times, and the people and places which we remember. I am delighted to escort her, but acknowledge that, although I am beginning to know the country, and can guide her through the boggy and difficult ground, I cannot rely on being always in the first flight. She assures me that she is not ambitious, and will be quite contented to see as much of the run as she can, without any great amount of riding.

Indeed, I guessed as much, for though a perfect horsewoman, as one can see at a glance, her style of riding is of that quiet order which betokens a gentle nature. In our excursions through the lovely country of the sunny South, we had often indulged in an occasional canter which sometimes resulted in a race, but for the greater part of our rides we allowed our horses to proceed at a foot-pace, so that we might enjoy the view and converse on such things as interested us. Our surroundings were not such as to suggest "the chase" as a subject for conversation. And as we wandered on in dreamy bliss, I never imagined that our next meeting would be in a stirring hunting field. But here she is, and

will no doubt expect to see *something* of the run. I must do my best to shew her the way as far as I can safely, and without my usual blunders. But having my adventures of yesterday before me, I think it right to warn her that I am not much of a pilot. This confession, however, does not seem to trouble her in the least, or to be of any consequence. For no sooner do we find, than she calls out, "This way!" and makes towards a gap which no one else appears to have noticed, as all turn in a different direction. Soon after she again calls out, "This way!" and I perceive that I am on the eve of riding into a green bog. She selects the soundest crossing place, and leads me to a hand-gate—leads *me*, her self-appointed pilot.

Presently we come to a bank with a deep gully on the further side, and this she takes so neatly that the place seems to be quite an easy one. But when I get to the top and look down into the depths below, I shudder. Bound to follow, I seize the cantle of saddle, and shut my eyes, leaving all responsibility to my horse. There is a slide, a jump, a scramble up the other side, and the peril is past. With hat receding, and ears laid back like a frightened rabbit's, weak knees, and "all over of a trimmle," I follow my leader over an ugly stile and a stone fence with steps on either side. The top of the fence is slippery, and I am glad she does not see the expression of my



"BOUND TO FOLLOW."

"THE TOP OF THE FENCE IS SLIPPERY."

face at the moment of my attaining this uncomfortable elevation. However, we land safely and find ourselves in a farmyard, where we create no little disturbance amongst the pigs and poultry, as we dash through them, and out of the yard gate, and on to the high road. Here we pull up to give hounds time to cross. And my companion turns to me, and in great glee, says, "We had the best of that. Isn't it fun? How glad I am that I kept with you instead of joining the others." Here the others come up. Hounds run for a short distance parallel to the road and then cross it.

My fair leader, who has been with them ever since the find, and has thoroughly enjoyed herself—I have been too anxious for her and my own personal safety to do so—again takes to the enclosures, which she seems to prefer to the road. Hobson's choice for me! I must follow. Indeed, I am beginning to like the fun. Fence after fence we negotiate, keeping in the same field with hounds.

At length the fox takes refuge in the village of Bradford. And as we have no magistrate's warrant for a house to house search, and no wish to endanger the china and chimney ornaments of the good dames of this quiet town, all further proceedings against Mr. Reynard are stayed. For hounds are dangerous animals to introduce into a neat old lady's abode. I have seen a hound come out through glass and

framework of an upper window at toot of huntsman's horn.

We draw off well pleased with our day's sport. Now the run is over I can look back on it with pleasure. Though I was at first far from convinced of the prudence of our movements, and at times, "as limp as a scared corncrake," I began at last to enjoy the run which we—or rather my fair companion saw from find to finish. Thanks to herself, though she puts all the credit to my account, and says, "How well you managed to keep with the hounds! I have enjoyed myself *immensely*. I *am* so much obliged. You have given me a great treat."

Mr. Calmady regrets that there is no brush for her. She assures him that she is quite satisfied with the enjoyable run, and thanks him for a very pleasant day. Then turns for home. She begs me not to think of accompanying her, and so lose the chance of another run. But I tell her that I wish to keep the recollection of this run distinct from any other.

Very fortunate to-day in my journey across country, I have gone well. And, though in the first part of the run "you could have knocked me down with a feather," I have taken a very forward place, and got off without a single mishap. Why should I not be content to let well alone?

Besides, I look forward to a pleasant ride with my

love. And a very pleasant ride it proves to be. The subject of our discourse I leave my readers to guess. Suffice it to say I return home so full of happiness, that I cannot refrain from giving William a hint as to the cause of it. And just before dinner, when on my way to the cellar, I overhear William say, "Cook, do you know the meaning of a new departure? According to master's account it means a mort of things from port wine and thin sandwiches to matrimony."

Dinner ended, my easy-chair receives me, a happier and more fortunate man than on the previous evening. I try to realize my bliss, and to assure myself that it is not all a dream. How much it would have added to my father's happiness during his last days, had he known what was to be the result of this afternoon's ride. He was a great admirer of my chosen one, and so charmed with her loveliness of person and mind, that I feel sure he had set his heart on her becoming my wife. He had seen her almost daily during her stay in the Riviera, as her brother and his invalid wife with whom she lived had taken a house close to ours. I used to drive and ride about the country with them, and sometimes wander with her alone through the sweet-scented orange groves, and along the bright shores of the Mediterranean.

What a blissful time was mine, while those happy

months lasted! How sad, after the departure of the delightful family for their home in England! I think my father guessed that my mind dwelt on the loss of my fair companion more than was good for me, and to arouse me from my melancholy he used of an evening, when we were alone, to tell me stories of things that had occurred in the merry days when he was young.

I remember his describing what a very different thing shooting was in those days to the present mode of slaughtering game. It took no little time to *load* a "piece" fifty years ago. And when the flint locks were in use some of the guns were nearly six feet long, and had to be sloped to an angle of forty-five degrees before the shotsman could get at the muzzle. This of course added to the labour and difficulty of loading. But even in my father's time it was a long operation, particularly to those men who did not possess a spring-top powder flask and shot pouch.

The manner in which the loading was done, my father described thus:—The shotsman, after grounding his "piece," drew from his pocket a cow's horn, its larger end, stopped with a bit of oak wood, formed the bottom of flask. The pointed end of horn was made to unscrew, and to hold such a charge as would send off two or three ounces of shot with a very perceptible recoil, which often left a bruise on

"TWO OR THREE PIPES TO THE LOAD."

the shoulder of a neophyte. When the top of horn had been unscrewed, filled with powder, emptied into barrel of gun, and screwed on again, and the flask committed to an inside breast pocket, then began a search for paper, which was used instead of wadding. The pockets of a shooting-jacket were in those days numerous, very deep, and with narrow openings, so that the search took time, and when the brown paper or news sheet was at last drawn forth and a piece of required size torn off, folded, and placed at the gun's muzzle, the ramrod was drawn forth from its loops and applied to the paper to send it down on the powder and to give sundry sharp raps thereon, till the rod rebounded freely. This was often accompanied with a sort of incantation—" Ram the powder, not the lead ; Fire straight, and you'll kill quite dead." When the ramrod had been temporarily placed in the sportsman's mouth, a bag of shot was produced, its string untied, and a load scooped out with the bowl of a clay pipe—two or three pipes to a load. Sometimes the brass nose of an umbrella was used as a measure, but this bit of grandeur could only be indulged in by the more wealthy part of the community. The palm of the hand was used if there chanced to be no other measure. When the shot had been poured into the gun, the paper and ramrod process was repeated, but without the finishing raps. Then before the

ramrod was drawn out, the measure of the whole load was taken by placing the hand edgewise across the muzzle to see if the ramrod was a hand breadth or four inches higher than in the unloaded gun. After returning the rod into its loops, the nipple had to be examined, to see if the powder was up, and if not up, the cock was let down on the nipple, the gun turned hammer under, and smitten with the hand. If this did not succeed, the powder horn had to be again brought into use, and some powder shaken out on the top of nipple and forced down grain by grain with the point of a pin. Then was drawn forth a tin box of percussion caps, one of which was taken out, bitten to ensure its clinging to the nipple, where it was now placed, the hammer pressed down on it, then raised to half-cock, and the shotsman was again ready for action.

And, during this lengthy process, a thorough explanation was given to any chance bystander as to how the deed of blood had been accomplished. From the first suspicion that game was lurking in a certain spot, to the last act of the drama—the final catastrophe. Or if the shot had been an unsuccessful one, a full and satisfactory explanation as to the cause of failure was duly rendered, and the bystander made aware how the unlucky and unlooked-for miss had happened.

By the present mode of using two, or as

some do three, breech-loaders, a man might have made considerable havoc among his birds while these intricate manœuvres were going on. But the triumph of each successful shot would not have been so great, or celebrated with so much joy, and even reckoned worthy of being recorded in history.

My father's old keeper had lived in the days of flint-lock guns, and been one of the few who could shoot a bird on the wing with that sort of weapon. No easy feat; as half or quarter of a second had to be allowed for the interval between the flash in the pan and the igniting of powder in the breech. But these guns seem to have possessed power and wide scope, as the old fellow, who was truth itself, said, that with a single barrel he once pulled down a covey of seven, as they passed through a narrow opening in a hedge.

His brother used often to accompany him in his pursuit of game, but was not very skilful with his weapon, and did not bring much to bag. But he always considered that he had hit the object fired at. A hare would go away with the whole load in his side, and a woodcock mortally wounded, and ought to have known that it was so, would persist in flying on as if nothing was the matter. The report of this man's "piece" was usually followed by a cry—and a very squeaky, quavering cry it was—of "Mark, Sam, crippled cock, er's a crippled, er's

a crippled!" And his brother would say, "Why ever don't 'e knack 'em right down at wonst."

My father had, as he supposed, this one old keeper only to take care of a wide tract of rough country in mid Devon. But when, on his return from the Crimean War, he, with some friends, visited this part of a property, to which he had succeded whilst still a young lieutenant, he found fifteen keepers awaiting his arrival. Men that had been preserving the game on their farms and small holdings for the young squire. All were armed with "brishers," sticks about four feet long, on which, when standing still, they usually leaned with arms crossed. All these men had come to show the whereabouts of coveys that "belanged" to their farms, *and* to see the sport.

The old keeper had at his heels, as companion, retriever, and general servant, a little spaniel, which, at a signal from its master, would go into the thickest covert of brambles or furze, and run the whole length of a blackthorn hedge, "Because," said the old man, "I never told un a lie," meaning, that he never put the dog into creep or "bushment" unless there were signs that flax or feather had recently passed in, or when there was wounded or dead game to seek for.

He was host of the inn where the shooting party were to lodge, but his house was in a very quiet

neighbourhood, where there was not much passing. He did not see many strangers in the course of the year, and the arrival of a visitor gave cause for much speculation as to who and what the guest might be.

There had passed on the previous day a traveller, who had very much puzzled him.

"A kurious sort of a gennelman come by here yesterday," he said; "a kurious body, sure enough. Can't tell whaat a waas. Some perfession, so I s'pose. Never shaves top lip."

A moustache had not been seen or heard of in that primitive place. The Crimean War was responsible for the introduction of what the old keeper thought an "outlandish thing."

My father never forgot the kind and hearty reception which he met with on this occasion, and prized very highly the goodwill of these honest men; for it is not to be gained by everyone. And he felt sure that their regard for him was sincere. In truth, he was worthy of their regard and admiration. Kind, genial, handsome, he had distinguished himself in the charge of Yorke Scarlett's heavy brigade.

These men had seen honourable mention of him in the papers, and were truly proud of their landlord. I can imagine his arrival at the little inn, in front of which his loyal and loving tenants stand, hat in hand, and with beaming countenances, to welcome him back safe and sound from the wars.

A little in advance of the group, a tall, slight, active figure, stands the old keeper, with his faithful spaniel wagging his tail in sympathy with its master's joy at once more setting eyes on the pride of his heart, the boy whom he had taught to shoot, and had initiated into the mysteries of woodcraft.

But all these men are now dead and gone. Another generation has taken their place. Shall I find the present men loyal and generous as their fathers? I am a perfect stranger to them, and must not expect too much at first. But I will try to gain their hearts.

And here I will end this chapter, and in the next give an account of my father's day's shooting.

## My Father's Adventures.

HERE is my father's story of his day's shooting.

Arrived at the little inn, the shotsmen after tapping each pocket in order to feel if it contained its own proper part of the ammunition, and after calling over the muster roll of their forces. Powder? Shot? Caps? Wadding? Gun? started for the nearest barley arish where a fine covey of nineteen "meated." They had not gone far when they came upon a man leaning over a gate, and all but concealed in its deep recess. He turned as they passed, and took off his hat to my father. This ally had been too shy and modest to "put 'isself fore at the arrival of the gentlevolks," but being a great friend of the old keeper's, he was now admitted among the privileged ones who were to wait upon the guns. Not so, however, the next man who came in view, standing with arms crossed and leaning on his "brisher." A hospitable saying of the country, "Whenever you come within half-a-mile of my house, I hope you'll stop there," was extended to this man, who had come considerably within half-a-mile of the nineteen covey's dwelling-place, and

was requested to stop there, "where a waas," to mark the birds if they should come back in that direction. Presently the party came upon a *group* of men and boys, all with arms crossed and resting on their "brishers," and all come to mark, but *hoping*, no doubt, to have the pleasure of following the shotsmen and witnessing their performance. But this was not to be allowed—for the present. Some of them were sent to high ground, where they could get a good view of the flight of birds. Some were told off to climb into the tops of trees, or to place themselves on high banks, where they stood the risk of being peppered. Whilst the privileged ones, in groups of three or four, followed the guns, and marked as far as they could. Immediately on reaching the barley arish, the dogs stood, and the men told each other in an excited whisper, "There they *be*. That's them. That's the birds. I was *sure* they was here. I heerd 'em cal'ing in the old grass outside about day's break." One of the guns had stopped behind to do up a bootlace, but the dogs remained still and rigid, and a murmur of admiration at their steadiness went the round of the men, and ended in "Tow-o, tow-o," which made the leading dog look back contemptuously, as much as to say, "I am tow-o-ing, stupids."

And when the covey rose the dogs were bewildered indeed, and knew not what was expected of them,

for from the lusty lungs of the fifteen went forth such a shout of "Maark" as could be heard a mile off. Even from the shy man there went forth a faint cry, he quickly turned away, however, as if ashamed at this display of boldness.

But could this be *the* covey. The markers, open-mouthed and shading their eyes with their hands, could make out only eleven birds in the air. They turned to see how many had been killed; and when they had collected eight full-grown birds from the arish, great was their delight. And one old fellow flapping the skirts of his coat, as a crowing cock flaps its wings, laughed merrily, and in a shrill voice sang out "Vine work, *vine* work." Good practice continued, and the bag filled rapidly. Sometimes a covey would be marked into rushes, or short furze, or scattered along a hedge-grip from which they would rise singly, or in twos and threes, when they seldom got further than the top of the hedge-bushes, or exceeded in their flight twenty or thirty yards: at that distance they generally came to a full stop. When the shooting party had advanced some distance, a cry or holloa of "Way, way, yep," assembled the markers from their stations to take up fresh posts of vantage. There did not appear to have been any casualties among them, though they had exposed themselves so freely to the chance of receiving what was intended for a "patherage." Indeed,

they appeared in greater force, and went on increasing as the guns advanced to fresh ground. So that when luncheon-time arrived, though two huge pasties had been provided, and the old keeper carried his own "apple creamy," apple pasty with some cream inserted, and the shy man refused to eat as his "stomach wouldn't bear it," each one's share amounted to only three inches of very heavy paste, inclosing a bit of hard meat, which was washed down with a modest pull at the cider firkin. Yet they all seemed happy, and contented with their repast, and on making a fresh start, laid hold of their "brishers" with renewed vigour. Indeed, so excited was one of the boys, that, when a hare jumped out of her form, he gave chase, and prevented the guns from firing. "Get out of the way, you little atterflitter," shouted my father, "or I shall shoot you." The boy began to zig-zag like a jack-snipe, thus dodging, as he supposed, the shotsmen's aim. He made for the gate forthwith, and got behind its post. But from this shelter he ventured forth again, when the hare had been rolled over. The pleasure of picking up and handling a *hare* being irresistible. And as the other guns had gone on, and my father had discharged both barrels, there was time to secure the prize and get back before he had reloaded. But the boy was not happy until he again put the fence between him and his enemy;

and was overheard afterwards telling a companion of the escape which he had effected by his nimbleness, for said he, "I reckon they *would* have shet me ef I hadn't a rinned. But they would have bin hanged for it, wouldn't mun?"

The birds on that day's beat having been "properly squandered," and the guns not caring to go back after single birds, the markers were called in and formed line, so many between each gun, to try some "big breeches," as large enclosures of furze and rushy, rough ground are called, where hares, that travel long distances for their food, sit in retirement, and where cattle who cannot get out are *supposed* to graze. My father passed a horse that was a mere skeleton, and remarked to one of the men that the horse was starved. "He must be a proper fule, then," the man replied, "for a caters for 'esself."

When all the party were in their places, the order was given that the whole line should advance. The "brishers," which had in the previous part of the day been held as in an "Alpenstock," were now reversed, and shaken at imaginary hares, as a schoolmaster's rod is handled to intimidate refractory boys. Soon there was a "Say-o!" And the *two* nearest guns closed upon the man who spoke. For a hare must not be allowed to get away "whatever." No matter how many barrels are discharged at it. The fusillade rather increases the fun, and adds to the glory of

the *successful* shotsman, who is henceforth looked upon with respect and admiration—so long as he can maintain his character as a good shot. But if anyone be so rash as to take the whole responsibility on himself, and happen to fail in his attempt, he sinks very low in the estimation of all present. They look askance at him.

The party had proceeded but a short distance after the first "Say-o!" when there is another. One of the markers pulled up short, and said, "There 'e sets, looking a peart as a postilegger." And again, after some scattered birds had been brought to bag, a hat was held up, and the owner, in an excited manner, beckoned to the nearest guns, and when they came up, said, "I 'most a stepped on un, and shoald 'ev, too, ef I hadn't seed the heye on."

The hare is forthwith poked out of its seat with a "brisher," and the next moment is lying belly uppermost, whilst from the beaters is heard the voice of approval, each hare killed adding to their delight. "That's capital!" "There a is again!" "Fustrate work!"

Then a pheasant got up, and though the first of October was three weeks' distant, one of the markers cried out, "Lay go tu un, lay go *toon!*" And then, as the pheasant sailed away unmolested, he took off his hat, and, scratching his head, said, "Dassy, I zim as orft to've 'ad thicky."

Another marker, when many hares, birds, vencock, and various had been added to the bag, anxious to increase the total to the utmost, said, "Now then, sir, I've marked in a snite by that 'plump of virs,' ef your honour would like to go fore and ha' a shot." But as the "virs" were a quarter of a mile back, instead of "vore," my father declined, with thanks; and being rather done with the heat and hills, he called at a roadside inn for some beer to refresh himself and the others with him. When the beer was brought out it was freely consumed by the markers, but my father and his friends could not drink it, as it had been doctored with sugar or treacle to rectify the effects of a thunderstorm. My father was longing for a fresh, foaming draught, and asked the woman of the inn if she had any bottled beer or bottled porter. She replied, "No, sir, we haven't got any bottled beer or bottled porter, but we've got some bottled rum and bottled gin." The latter might have done if copiously diluted; but the water there had a red iron sediment in it. So the shooting party, thirsty though they were, determined to betake themselves to their own inn.

On the way back the markers, in groups of three or four, turned off, from time to time, in the direction of their homes. And, with a bow, and "I wish your honours a good aveling," departed, much pleased with their day's sport. And though they

had tasted but little food since their early breakfast, looking quite fresh and cheerful, unsubdued either by hunger or fatigue, and much pleased at having been able to show the young squire so many *hares*.

The dinner at the inn was well cooked, and everything nice except the beer, which had been brewed after the same receipt as that with which the markers had regaled themselves at the end of the day's beat, and my father must have fallen back on the bottled rum and bottled gin, if he had not brought some wine with him. After dinner the old keeper entered, carrying in his hand a plate of hedgenuts, and stroking down his hair over his forehead, said, "Gennelmen, I can accommodate 'e with some nits." A glass of port was poured out for him, but being a very abstemious man, and modest, he refused it at first. After some pressing, however, he took the glass, and, raising it solemnly, said, "Gennelmen, you very good healths. And, better luck still."

The old keeper was a long time over his glass of port, and during the absorbing process told my father of the illness of a tenant who lived "home by." "Mr. Lillicrap isn't likely to be no better, so I s'pose." "I am sorry for that," said my father. "Is he confined to his bed?" "Well, sometimes he's to bade and sometimes down over stairs. But he's not likely to be no better." "Has he seen any

doctor?" asked my father. "O, iss, sure, 'e's bin down to Plemmath to Doctor Wise for advice, but Doctor Wise don't gee no advice now. A's radoosed, so I s'pose, for 'e doesn't *ge* no advice, but 'e charges a guinea, and then you go to a shop and have 'is subscription made up. Wall, Mr. Lillicrap went to un all the same, and took a guinea with un, and shewed Dr. Wise his leag—'tes 'is leag that's bad—and Dr. Wise said 'e'd never zeed such a thing—never—in all 'is born days! Then after thinking a bit 'e zaid 'e thought 'e '*ad* knawed a case something simler. But 'e couldn't tell whaat 'twaas. 'E'd look tu's buke, and if Mr. Lillicrap would cal again 'e'd tell 'n. Wall, he sarched 'is buke, and there 'twaas! And when Mr. Lillicrap comed again he told un—''Tes toadstools!'" "What!" says my father, "toadstools?" "Iss, *vay*, 'twaas toadstools! 'Twaas toadstools between the skin and the vlesh. 'Twould come out all scruffy like. Didn't bust. And 'twould hitch most dreadful. Wus hitch 'e ever knawed." At this report of Mr. Lillicrap's state, the party began to scratch themselves. The sufferer lived "home by." Infection was in the air, or contagion in the walls and door-posts, and even in the very chairs they were sitting on! They had caught the complaint. They could feel the toadstools growing. They would to bed, and examine themselves closely. But when they had divested

themselves of their garments, they could see no appearance of the disease. Nothing scruffy had come out, as yet, but the cold which my father felt after getting into bed was enough to check its coming out, and to throw it into the system. Knowing the danger of this, he took immediate steps to obviate it. The clothes were only sufficiently wide to cover the bed when empty, and having my father's big frame beneath them they drooped over him as a cloth over a table, leaving a wide opening or interregnum which admitted the draught from ill-fitting casements, door, and floor. He therefore got out of bed and collected garments enough to secure one side of him, and tucked in the bedclothes tightly on the other. But alas! his troubles did not end here. There was to be no rest for him that night. The house was divided by wooden partitions, every sound in the adjoining room was audible in his, and the snoring in one of the compartments made his bed vibrate. And early in the morning, just as he was dropping off to sleep, voices in the next room roused him. It seemed that a family conclave was being held to arrange about the day's luncheon, dinner, etc., for he heard the words, "Look, see here, 'ow be us going to order?" and then the voice of the old man calling to his granddaughter, "Rabecca, Rabecca, my dear, 'tes tiame to riise." And shortly after—the first call not

having had the desired effect—" Rabecca, my dear, 'tes time to riise; do 'e git up, that's a good maid, and ye sall ha' some nits." And a few minutes later, " Don't 'e make so much noise, my dear, you'll wake the gennelmen."

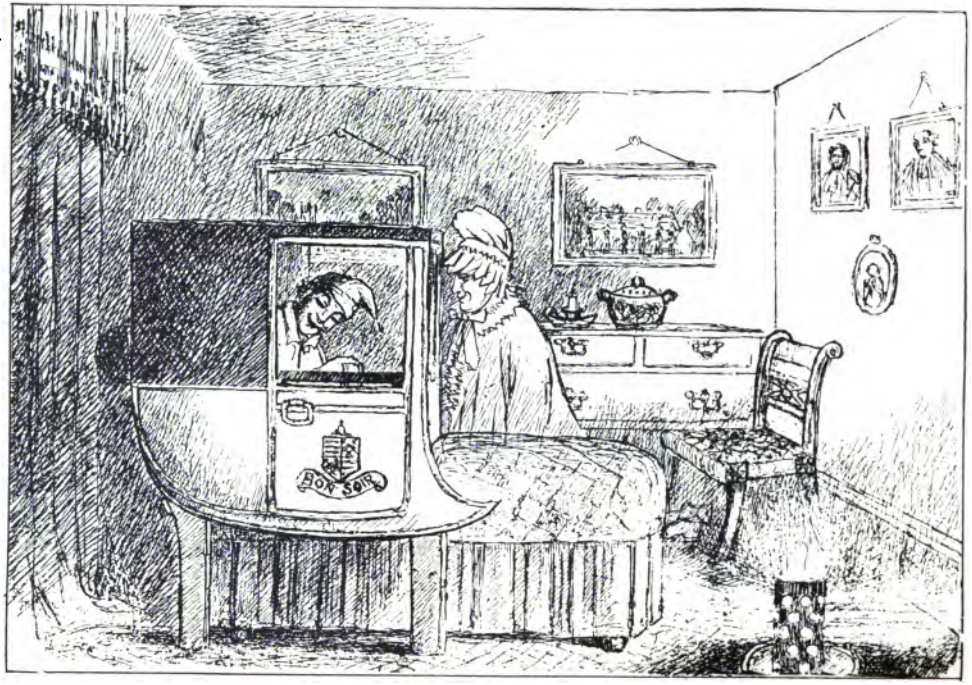
" Postera lux oritur multo gratissima," and the inconveniences of the night were forgotten in the enjoyment of the delicious freshness of the brightest of bright September mornings, and in the anticipation of another good day's sport, of which the party were not disappointed, for the old keeper's wish expressed overnight in the toast, " Better luck still," was realized. But they were all glad to find themselves in my father's comfortable home at night, for they had learnt from experience that Falstaff, when he used the words, " Shall I not take mine ease at mine inn, but I shall have my pocket picked," must have frequented a very different sort of inn from their last night's lodging, where honesty abounded but ease was scant.

The next day being Sunday, my father and his friends walked to the parish Church, where they found the parsonage pew, which was generally full to overflowing, empty. Something very serious must have happened, thought my father; for the vicar had a very large family—a very small income, though. Mouths were more plentiful than victuals, and backs than clothing. On the occasion of a

rather grand tea-party at the Vicarage, one of the boys was found to be so ragged that he was told to keep out of sight. But so perverse was he, and so anxious to see and be seen, that he got on the window sill, and walked up and down there during the entertainment, displaying to the company his tattered garments, which were only fit for a scarecrow.

On this particular Sunday none of the vicar's family were in Church. He alone was present, and looking very woe-begone. After service my father asked him if anything was amiss at home. "O, sir," he replied, "such a calamity, such a dreadful misfortune has befallen us! Mrs. B——, as her custom is, put the children's and her own clean things into the oven overnight, that they might be thoroughly dry for Sunday morning, and when she went to take them out, she found them all burnt, sir, burnt to a cinder. Fortunately, my shirt was not with the children's things, but airing on a chair by itself, and was thus saved, otherwise I do not know what I should have done. For all the things taken off on Saturday night are immediately placed in water to soak till Monday morning's washing, and we have no extra garments to fall back upon in an emergency of this kind."

The careful, but unfortunate mother came one day soon after this accident to call on my father about



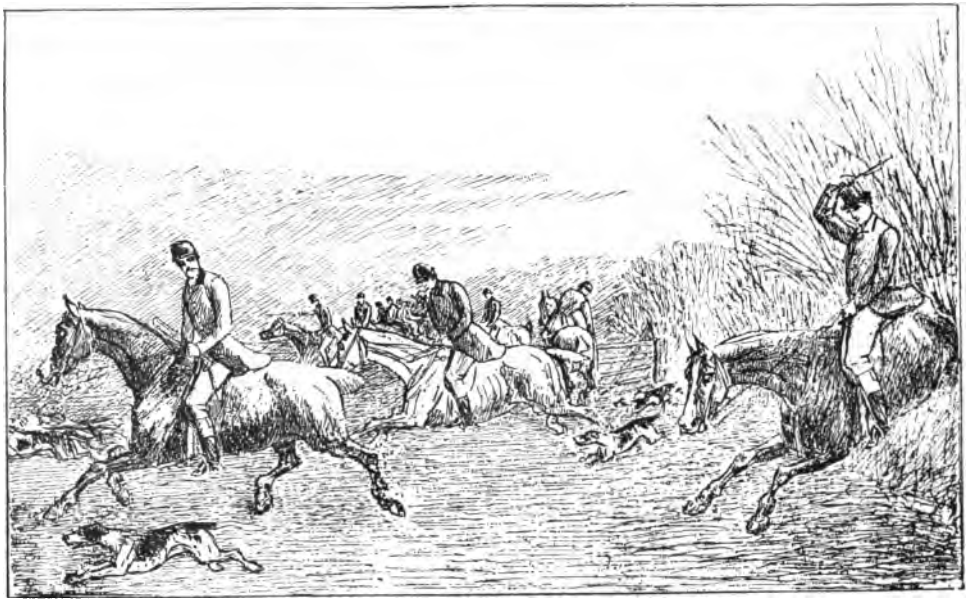

"AND *NO* DRAUGHT."

parish matters, and was taken to the farmyard to see some poultry. Whilst there the lady's eyes were attracted by an old chariot, a carriage on C springs, with two windows in front, and one on each side, and shaped like an old post-chaise, but more roomy. This old chariot, long past service, stood in an out-house. "Oh! what a beautiful carriage," she exclaimed; "I wonder you never use it. What a pity that it should not be turned to some account! I only wish *I* had it!" "Why, my dear madam," said my father, "the cocks and hens roost in it. But if it can be of any use to you, it is perfectly at your service." She was delighted, and sent for the carriage next day. And soon after, when my father called at the vicarage, she said, "Now, sir, I will show you to what use I have put your beautiful carriage." She led him upstairs to the room occupied by the worthy couple, where the carriage, taken off its own bed, had been placed on theirs, and made a very snug sleeping-place, when all the windows were drawn up. "Oh, sir," she said, "it is such a comfort! Mr. B—— is so delighted with it! He can lie in bed and look out of the windows, and see all about him. And *no* draught."

The bed was easily drawn out from beneath the front windows, when it had to be made. And the doors of the chariot opened upon the most convenient place for getting between the sheets.

Sixty years ago, and even later, all fresh air, or, as it was then called, draught, was, as far as possible, excluded from the beds, which were four-posted, and had a top or canopy over them, extending their whole length, and from the canopy a deep valance and fringe drooped over six curtains, two on each side, and two at the foot. These curtains were carefully closed, and sometimes pinned together at night to make things snug. The steads or frames were higher than at present, and had on them a mattress and two feather beds, or "ties," so that there was not above four feet distance to top or canopy of bed. The space within the curtains was therefore limited, and the view very much so, which accounts for the vicar's high appreciation of the chariot windows. The beds were so high that three steps were placed at their side to enable aspirants to mount.

I have seen a drawing—in *Punch* I think it is to be found—of "Last in bed put out the light." It represents a race between man and wife to do this bit of climbing, which, in addition to the help of steps, required a firm clutch at the bedclothes, and some considerable effort of muscular power. In the drawing the heads of the couple meet at the exact centre of the bed; so the race was a dead-heat, and required to be run over again.



MR. SPERLING ON ROBIN.

## Thursday, February 15th, 1894.

THIS is Mr. Sperling's day. His hounds were called "The Lamerton" before he took them on, seven years ago. He is not only an M.F.H., but also the owner of a pack of harriers. The meet is Tregeare. I ride Robin Hood. Mr. Sperling has, I am told, a horse, and a very good one, of the same name. Perhaps the two Robins may meet. The distance to Tregeare is great. I arrive late. The lodge keeper closes the gate against me, and points down the road on which the hounds are. I catch them up in time to see them thrown into covert. Find at once. And a splendid run is the result. As there is no fair companion with me to-day, I have time as I journey home to dwell on the day's sport, and to ride the run over again in my mind. I leave the description of the hounds and their work to one better qualified to write it. I am a stranger to the country, and can give no better description of the day, which I enjoyed in company with others, than is to be found in the following ode

## TO ROBIN.

Though cold winter still wears her grey mantle and snood,
Bright as summer the eye of the glad Robin Hood
As he comes forth so blithely. Of Jack-in-Green's "bluid"
And the pride of the stable is gay Robin Hood.
And lo! here comes his master, in merriest mood,
For to-day he's to ride thee, his best, Robin Hood.
They are off to Tregeare. At the lodge they're taboo'd,
For the hounds have passed on. Here they are, Robin Hood.
At a signal from Spiller they fly to the wood,
Spreading out o'er the covert. Stand still, Robin Hood.
Surely *there* was a whimper! Yes: there again. Good!
It's a find! it's a find! Trembles bold Robin Hood?
Yes: but not with cold fear, or the lack of good food;
'Tis the pack's joyous music stirs keen Robin Hood.
Fast and fierce to the front thrust the hard ones, who stood
On the Attery's marshes, past flecked Robin Hood,
For his master reins in. Rob would lead if he could.
"Shall they throw back the dirt at me?" quoth Robin Hood.
Now wild Robin be patient, get clear of the wood,
And 'tis then I'll indulge thee, my hot Robin Hood.
Far behind lies the vale whence the "field" just now moved;
Fast, oh fast flies the ground 'neath the fleet Robin Hood.
They're away to the downs where Rome's campment erst stood.

Have a care. Work's before thee, my fresh Robin Hood.
'Tis the run of the season. They're racing for blood.
" And I now hold my own," says the proud Robin Hood.
Let not sorrow be courted, nor danger pooh pooh'd;
Black and deep are the bogs here. Beware! Robin Hood.
There! we've got into trouble. I *knew* well we should
If we crossed this deep bottom. My poor Robin Hood!
" Do not grieve, my kind master; on trouble ne'er brood.
I'm in, and I'm out, sir!" says quick Robin Hood.
Ah! well done! stalwart Robin; as gold thou art good;
Tough and strong is thy fibre, my stout Robin Hood.
Now hounds fling to the right. Is it acre or rood
That we traverse so quickly, my swift Robin Hood?
Here's a fence, and a big one. Rob cares not a boud.
Sure you never can do it, my dear Robin Hood?
" Prithee, trust to me, master, mine's no doubting mood.
Funking's only for soft ones. But I'm Robin Hood.
Think, oh think what they'd say, sir, while munching their food
In the stable at home, of the 'Bold Robin Hood,'
If they heard of his flinching stone, water, or wood!
It is not to be thought of!" says stern Robin Hood.
Then erect sits his master, all doubt now removed;
He will *not* disappoint thee, my brave Robin Hood.
They are over. But hark! There's a holloa! He viewed!
" I must strive to be with them," says tough Robin Hood.
" Shall I prove me soft-hearted? Soft-hearted, beshrewed!

No one e'er saw me give in," says staunch Robin Hood.
But, lo! now comes the river, deep, rocky, in flood,
Twisted roots on its banks, too, to trap Robin Hood.
Oh! how much do I wish we on other side stood,
Rotten banks and tree roots cleared by thee, Robin Hood.
For I like not the prospect of *cold* bath. Who would?
"But the pace keeps the blood warm," says clipped Robin Hood.
It is crossed. Hear the music! Straight up through Torwood
Fly poor Reynard, and hounds, and the wet Robin Hood,
T'wards the moors where huge tors of grey granite protrude,
Warbstow Burrows in foreground, now strides Robin Hood.
They're from scent into view! He will soon "dree his drood."
Hounds are straining. Oh! stick to them, game Robin Hood.
Though yet fast flies stout Reynard, by yokels hallood,
Faster follow the hounds, faster, too, Robin Hood.
Gallant fox, thou'rt rolled over. 'Mongst hounds there is feud,
And a sob seems to come from the spent Robin Hood.
The excitement was madd'ning while chase was pursued;
Now he shrinks from the "worry," does "Bold Robin Hood."
For the brave respect courage, and pluck unsubdued,
Be it e'en in an enemy. Home! Robin Hood.

## Friday, February 16th, 1894.

"BATH ready, sir," says William. I spring from my bed as if shot from a catapult. Such a day's sport and such delightful company as I enjoyed on Wednesday has given a zest to life, and made quite a new man of me. No longer do I care for that extra half-hour's snooze which entails hurry and vexation. "On beds of down your *dandies* lie, and waste the cheerful morn." Not I. I am now one of the right sort. No irresolution now. I get up at once, dress, breakfast, and ride forth to "Stowford Cross." I am on "Skylark," and feel like flying. All nature is bright and joyous. The birds are serenading their mates, and warbling forth a happy presage for the coming day. As I jog along I hum to myself the old ballad which I learned of my father—

> "It was early in the spring, when the merry birds did sing,
> And they sang of a hunting morning."

I arrive at the meet in good time, and soon my Valentine of Wednesday appears. We ride on together to Upcott Gorse, which is drawn blank; thence to Cowditch Plantation, where a fox is found

that gives us a ring through Hunscott, Bratton, Blagadon, and back again. It is said to be a vixen, but I am no expert in such matters.

I was sorely tried last month when shooting with an Irish officer who rents a place near me. We had killed a great many hares, and my friend, after consultation with his keeper, said to me, "I don't think wee shall keell any more haeres. I don't know quhat wee will do with the haeres." Then after a little thought he said, "Whell, eef it's a bhuck or jack ye may shoot, but spare does, spare does." And this to a man who can hardly distinguish a hen from a cock pheasant when the order is given, "Spare hens."

From Cowditch, giving the fox the benefit of a doubt, we go on to draw for a fresh one, and on Circuit Moor we find one of the straight-nose sort, and which some knowing men pronounce to be of the real old tiger breed. He goes away in full view of the whole field, and with the pack at his brush. The rush of cavalry is terrific, and in the confusion and blinding showers of mud and peat from leading horses' heels, I lose my fair one for a time. But when the "field" opens out a bit, and I recover the use of my eyes, I catch sight of her at the tail of the pack. At racing speed I follow, but still in the ruck, worse luck, as all are going their best.

Close to the town of Holsworthy a check enables

"OF THE REAL OLD TIGER BREED."

me to come up with the hounds and my lady love, which seems to mean one and the same thing, as she is always with them. There is only time to greet one another with a smile of satisfaction at our reunion, when a halloa forward enables Mr. Coryton to get his hounds again on the line, which they carry on over moor and open country, till we feel the sea breezes fan our heated brows. And near the old house, "Langford Hill," the hounds run into the gallant fox in the open, after a run of an hour and twenty-five minutes.

My companion and I refresh our tired horses at Marhamchurch, and then ride slowly home, congratulating ourselves at having been so fortunate as to see this grand run, and hoping to enjoy just such another to-morrow.

I am beginning to thoroughly appreciate a good thing, for I can look about me now. These West country banks have not the unpleasant look to me that they had. My horses seem to like them, and, on approaching one, gather their hind legs under them in such a manner as to give confidence to the rider that he is sure to reach the top, and the power of gravity will do the rest. And oh, how the music of a pack of hounds rouses the blood and puts one on his mettle!

I leave my *fiancé* at her friend's house, and late in the evening once more find myself in my comfortable

armchair, after having dined well. "Sure, never man's prospects were brighter," as the Oxford freshman sings. I am the accepted suitor of the most lovely of England's lovely daughters, and I have distinguished myself in the hunting field.

From Holsworthy to the finish I was in the first flight; indeed, often first, save that a vision of beauty glided on before me, o'er moor and fen like a Will o' the Wisp, and as unapproachable, but never leading its follower into trouble, as that false guide does.

I hope to-morrow's performance will prove that I have really and truly gained much in skill and judgment by the last three days' experience in riding to hounds. "Chapman's Well" is the fixture for to-morrow, and is the very place from which my father had a run which resulted in an unusual finish. The meet was a very favourite one in the days when Mr. Phillipps hunted the country, and before the downs and moors had been enclosed and subdivided. On the occasion to which my father's story alludes, the hounds found late in the day, and it was growing dark when, after a very fine run, they killed their fox in the open.

Whilst the obsequies were going on, there was a distant sound of hounds running. It came nearer and nearer, till at last a pack of rather small size hounds swept by at a rattling pace. My father and

two others who were present followed them, as did also a farmer on a bare-back steed who had witnessed the last part of the run and the death of the "Chapman's Well" fox. They had a brilliant ten minutes, and the light just allowed them to see a second fox rolled over in the open. The farmer was particularly delighted with the performance, and said, "They be vine little dogs, I warn 'em. But, sir, be 'em haryers or *fox* taryers? They're a rare little pack, whatever they be."

And after this exciting sport he went back to the inn, where he had left his cart and "sharpt" horse, and there got so overcome with drink that he fell asleep in his cart on the way home, and met with a curious adventure. Meantime the three friends took charge of the hounds, and brought them back to the home of one of the party, who lived near at hand. And then my father and his other companion, after stopping awhile to refresh themselves and their horses, proceeded on their homeward road.

My father's fellow-traveller rode on for some distance silent and pre-occupied, chafing, it seems, about an argument which he had that morning held with a brother sportsman with regard to the movement of the sun; for after riding some way in silence, he blurted out, "They du tell up such stuff! What du 'e think they say now? Why,

they say the sun doesn't muve! No, if you please, 'tis the earth that muves! Passel of old nonsense. The sun not muve, indeed! Can't I believe my own eyes? Don't I *see* en muve? Ha'nt I seen en all the days of my life going down behind the Cornish hills, eveling after eveling? Passel of rubbish, that's what 'tis."

Here he arrived at a point where the road branched off towards his distant home in North Devon, and my father proceeded alone along the highway. He had not gone far, however, before he overtook a butt—as a two-wheel cart is called here—and in it, after close scrutiny, he recognized, by the faint starlight, the very farmer who had been present at the death of both foxes. My father was unable to rouse him, and fearing some accident, dismounted, tied his hunter to a gate, and leading the farmer's horses to a bit of waste ground by the roadside, took them out of the cart, and dismissed them with a crack of his whip to their home, and left the owner in his butt to sleep off his potations.

A man, up early to visit his lambing ewes, saw him wake, sit up in his cart, scratch his head, and look about him to find out "where 'e waas *to*." He seemed puzzled at finding no horses in front of him. Again he scratched his head, and peered out over the side of the butt to read the name painted on it. He repeated the name aloud to himself, and said,

"Jan Poat. But be I Jan Poat, or bant I Jan Poat? If I be Jan Poat, I've a lost my 'osses. . . . And if I bant Jan Poat, . . . I've a vound a butt."

The question was solved on his reaching Jan Poat's home, where the rating which he got from J. P.'s wife thoroughly convinced him of his identity. His dog's tail, too, wagged as well as the housewife's tongue. The horses also, grazing in "Bo' town," recognized his voice, and came to his call. And soon man, horses, and cart were put together again, and the veritable Jan Poat and equipage entered his own farmyard, but not in triumph; for being unable to account for last night's proceedings, he looked rather ashamed of himself.

Will any such queer tale arise from to-morrow's doings, I wonder? And what will my "Chapman's Well" day bring me with regard to sport? Two kills in the open? A repetition of to-day's splendid run will suffice me.

## Saturday, February 17th, 1894.

ALAS! alas! I wake to hear the rain beating against my window and gushing from the shutes. I get out of bed and look forth. All external objects are blurred in a dull, leaden ocean of moisture. But remembering the old saying—there are exceptions to all rules—"Rain at seven, clear at eleven," I take courage and start for "Chapman's Well." The name of the "meet" does not sound very tempting in such weather. I hope Mr. Chapman will not put me into his well, and so finish what the morning threatens to do for me.

I arrive at the "meet" damp, decidedly damp. The rain is coming in at sundry parts of my clothing. The day is bitterly cold, too; and it is quite a relief to find that my lady love has not been allowed to face such weather as this. But here is the Master, staunch to his tryst, though his years must be approaching the allotted threescore and ten. As for myself, though not arrived at that period of life, I have arrived at a very wet period, and am fast approaching a state of pulp. But I try to look happy and hopeful and as if nothing were the matter, though I feel every moment fresh streams issuing

from my spongy garments. The assemblage of dripping men and horses move off to a brake adjoining the "meet," and, unperceived by me, in consequence of the blinding rain, slip through some gate or gap that admits them to firmer going, and I find myself alone in my glory. The ground is treacherous, and I am soon floundering through a soft place, and sink to the girths. Horse comes out thickly plastered with black slime. My boots, too, have received a coating of the same composition, and my whole person is sprinkled with jets of bog water.

Out of this moor in which I find myself the only way seems to be over a high bank, with a broad, wet ditch on the take-off side. I dismount, throw the reins over my horse's neck, slip whip-lash through them, jump the ditch with difficulty, as my garments are clinging to me and heavy with wet, climb to top of bank, and give my horse a jerk of the bridle to make him follow me. He runs backwards, and pulls me off the fence into the deep trench of red, iron water at the foot. Try again. Get over this time, but in landing on the other side of bank slip, and fall on my face and hands into yellow clay.

The next fence has a slight-looking oak branch across the opening at which I ride. The branch is stiffer than it seemed to be. I cannot push it aside, and am wrenched out of my saddle, and fall into

blue clay this time. I am becoming a highly decorated work of art, for in passing through a thick copse huge brambles tear my cheeks and streak them with red, and an inky purple is running down my forehead from a soaked hat, that has assumed the shape of a "Beefeater's."

And what can I expect in return for all this annoyance? Scent must surely be drowned, as was the Irishman's whisky, when "some mischavious person had poured a lot of wather on top of it." Still it was, he hoped, to be got at near the bottom of his glass. But the hounds, I fear, will not to-day get at a taste or touch of scent, as more water is being continually poured on it. Hounds' noses must be completely stuffed up with water; let them sneeze as they will. It is water, water everywhere. It runs down the nape of my neck, it falls from my hat to the saddle, and from saddle and overcoat glides beneath my knees and into my boots, which are becoming like a pair of full water cans. I must empty them on the first opportunity. There is a gate before me, which has to be unbound. I get down to do this, and as there is no one near—if the field were trying to keep away from me, they could not do so more effectually—I cast myself down on the wet spongy ground, and kick up my heels in the air. But the water will not leave me. It merely passes from one part of me to another. From my boots it glides along my

"I FIND MYSELF ON THE ROOF OF A CART SHED."

tilted legs to waistband and small of back. The sensation is electrifying. I cannot bear the shock. The water trickling up my spine makes me shiver. I get up and unbind the gate, mount, and proceed across a ploughed field—very deep going indeed—to a fence into the high road. The driving rain confuses me, and half blinded I jump on to what appears to be an ordinary bank, and find myself on the roof of a cartshed which has the hedge in place of a back wall. What is to be done? If I advance a step farther I shall go through. I must retrace my steps if possible. I do so without mishap. For, though my horse's hind legs break into the thatched roof as he turns, yet he cleverly recovers himself, and descends safely to *terra firma*. I look out a place free from lean-to farm buildings, and get into the road. Meantime the hounds, whilst I have been manœuvering at a distance, have been steadily drawing brake after brake, covert after covert, in vain. I catch sight of them every now and then, but can never get to them. I see them now crossing a deep bottom, towards a gorse on the opposite hill. I try once more to join them, and get "properly stogged" in a athomless mire. The rain is coming down in torrents, the wind is "cruel cold," and my teeth chatter, as I try to assist and encourage my horse to extricate himself from the bog. He cannot do so. I have to seek help at a neighbouring farm. With

the aid of three strong men and ropes I get out my poor nag. Scrape him, to find the saddle. Mount, and go home.

Query: Will my people know me when I get there? Will they recognize, in this double-skirted, painted mummy, and mud-encased hippopotamus, the gay master and bright bay hunter that left them in the morning? And oh! the destruction to clothes and saddlery! not to mention the risk of colds to self and valuable hunter.

This reckless sacrifice of property must not go on. It will be perfect ruin. I go better in company, and I want help in directing my home affairs too. My place in Thursday's run was due to a clever hunter, but all horses are not Robin Hoods. But the ready judgment and quick perception of my fair companion of Wednesday and Friday are of priceless value, not only in the hunting field, but in a home. She is an Egeria to me. Had she met me at the Well (Chapman's) to-day, my course would not have been fraught with so much ill.

Next week—if I can get the lady's permission to do so—steps shall be taken towards securing me a charming counsellor, who shall help to direct my future course aright.

I will put in my banns, and crown my new departure by acquiring the advantages of "The Married Bachelor."

## Married—Wedding Tour.

IT is done. The banns have been called. The marriage ceremony has been performed. And amid the ringing of bells, cheers of friends, and a shower of old slippers, I drive off with my wife to spend the honeymoon in Italy. But we never get further than London. Here I find out, quite by accident, that Italy has no attraction for her equal to home, my much-loved home. This I discover one day on proposing that she should get some additional furniture and ornament for her drawing-room and boudoir. She will not hear of it. She has seen my house, and says, "The dear old place is simply perfect, and wants *nothing* to improve it. And oh! *how* she is longing to find herself there!"

Can I believe my ears? What joy to hear this! It is the very wish of my heart to see her duly installed as mistress of my hearth and home. Such, then, being the desire of both of us, we decide to turn our steps westward at once.

## Home.

WE have been at home for a few weeks only, yet every province of my little kingdom has experienced a new departure. I am still *supposed* to rule, but I have to submit to the guidance

of my Prime Minister. And the chief duty required of me now is to assent to her enactments, and to attach my name to certain documents. But I must say that since she has held the offices of Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home and Foreign Minister, there has been an improvement in the State affairs. All has been well in my dominion and prospered under her rule. She is very popular, too, and has won the hearts of my subjects, over whom she possesses unlimited sway. Sometimes I venture to give orders as of yore, when I was an absolute monarch. But my commands are treated as unconstitutional. If I tell my old and loyal subject William to do such and such a thing, he reverently and politely suggests that perhaps missis will not like it. If I ask my cook to sometimes give me certain savoury dishes that I favoured of old, she replies, "You had better speak to missis, and she will no doubt allow you to have them." When I order a recently purchased horse to be saddled for me, my groom says, "Missis has given particular orders that he is never to be brought out again for your riding, sir, as he is unsafe." Still, I must not murmur. All is done for my sake, and to secure my welfare and happiness.

My wife is very fond of gardening, and I have committed to her charge the laying out of flower beds, and requested her to make any alteration in

the grounds that she thinks will be an improvement, whilst I busy myself about my new farm buildings.

After we have completed our arrangements we start for a six weeks' visit to my brother-in-law and his wife, who have returned from their winter quarters in Italy to spend the summer months at their place in Yorkshire. When we come back to our home I am surprised at the change I find there. The garden is laid out in the most perfect taste. The flowers form exquisite combinations of colour, and also fill the air with delicious scents.

"Why, Andrew," I say, "what have you been doing here?" "Well, sir," he replies, "'tesn't me, 'tes missis. But you'll get used to it after a bit. I didn't like the idea of it myself at fust, and I told missis I wouldn't be responsible for the consequences. And then I explained to her how we got our fine effects by using great masses of red and yellow. But she only laughed, and said, 'O, Andrew! I'm afraid you're not Eastmetic.' 'No, mam,' I said, 'I'm thankful to say I'm not.' Then she laughed again. And a pleasant laugh it was, too. I couldn't make it up; I was flabergastered. I couldn't believe that such a nice young lady would wish ill to an old man, and servant of your honour's, too. And you know, sir, astmatic, which I thought 'er meant, is a very bad complaint; not so bad, p'raps, as brown typhus, or broken chitis, as some cal it, but a

man died of it not long ago. You must have heard of it, sir." "No, Andrew." "Well, sir, you know Mr. Jay up to Yoticker? You were shooting over his farm last September. Well, 'twasn't he, 'twas honcle to 'e. Thes man died some years ago. He married Mr. Jay's father's wife's sester; and 'e died coming back from market in a waggon. But the mother o' un said, ef 'er'd bin there, 'er'd have saved un tho'. He'd bin offen took'd like that, and 'er used to put the bellows tu's mouth. O, sir, I was sure missis couldn't wish to get rids of me by this complaint, at a time, too, when the hotbeds and houses require so much attention. And by 'arkening tu 'er for a bit, I found out that Eastmetic doesn't mean astmatic, but a mixing up of a lot of different flowers to look like the bits of coloured glass in a kale eyea-scoop. You don't get the grand effect that whole beds of one colour give, but I zim arter all that the young lady's Eastmetic is more prettier like. *Old* missis's garden looks for all the world like a Torkey carpet spread out to air. 'Tes as nat'ral as life. And the border where we used to grow nasturtiums and a whole line of sunflowers that people admired so much, is now filled with sweet-smelling plants and flowers of all sarts and kinds. More *interesting* like. But it adds to the work, for some fresh flower is continually making its appearance, and I 'ave to put a name tu't. I've used up all I can think on, so

I look out some fresh uns out of Mr. Veitch's buke, and keep repeating of them over and over again till missis comes out, when she is sure to remark the new flowers, and to ask me what they be. And very thankful she is for the information I gee 'er. I will say that. But it's hard work."

From the garden and rosary I go on to the old bowling green, beyond which, lo and behold! a newly-made tennis and croquet ground, and beyond that again, a level stretch of meadow has been mown and rolled, and planted with archery butts. These preparations portend a grand gathering of the country side at no distant date: "to be continued," perhaps. I shall hear more of this anon.

One thing is certain, viz., that with all this seeming extravagance, my exchequer is in a flourishing condition, and everyone seems to smile on us in kindness and approbation: on me for bringing such a wife into the country, and on my wife for her own goodness, as it is evident, short though her sojourn here has been, that her chief pleasure consists in giving pleasure to others.

THE END.

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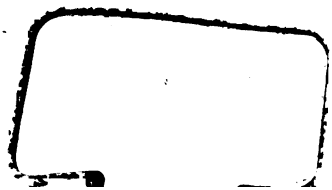

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